

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of removing excess fill material comprising:
providing a printed wiring board having filled holes and at least some excess fill material on a surface of the printed wiring board;
providing a system comprising a scavenging blade;
positioning the printed wiring board in the system; and
causing the scavenging blade to traverse at least a portion of the printed wiring board in a manner that causes the scavenging blade to remove at least a portion of the excess fill material from the printed wiring board.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the excess fill material extends out of a filled hole, and wherein the step of causing the scavenging blade to remove at least a portion of the excess fill material includes the step of shearing it off from the fill material within the filled hole.
3. The method of claim 2 further comprising a step of causing an edge of the scavenging blade to move away from the printed wiring board and, while the edge is positioned away from the printed wiring board, removing accumulated fill material from the blade.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the system comprising a scavenging blade further comprises a printed wiring board receiving portion; and a movement mechanism adapted to move the scavenging blade and printed wiring board receiving portion relative to each other.
5. The method of claim 4 wherein the scavenging blade is polished, flexible, and sharpened along at least one edge such that it has a width less than or equal to approximately .003 inches.

Scavenging Method

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6. The method of claim 1 wherein the system further comprises a filling mechanism to which the scavenging blade is coupled, and the step of causing the scavenging blade to traverse at least a portion of the printed wiring board involves causing the filling mechanism to traverse at least a portion of the printed wiring board.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein the step of causing the scavenging blade to traverse at least a portion of the printed wiring board involves causing the printed wiring board to move while the filling mechanism and coupled scavenging blade remain stationary.
8. The method of claim 7 wherein movement of the printed wiring board is at least partially accomplished by placing the printed wiring board on a conveyor belt or on a roller track.
9. The method of claim 6 wherein the filling mechanism comprises a filling head that can be moved closer to or farther away from the printed wiring board.
10. The method of claim 6 wherein the system comprises both first and second scavenging blades positioned on opposite sides of the printed wiring board.
11. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of causing the scavenging blade to traverse at least a portion of the printed wiring board involves causing the printed wiring board to move between the first and second scavenging blades while the first and second scavenging blades remain stationary.